

Life at Court

by Maatkare of Egypt

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Summary: Mahaad travels from his home to the royal palace and becomes an aspiring member of the Pharaoh's court. What dangers await him as he strives to protect his Prince from threats both abroad and at home?

Life at Court

Chapter 1: Mahaad's arrival at the Palace

Mahaad son of Nakht was only in his 13th year, when his life began to change forever. He was the eldest son of one of the wealthiest noble families in all of the city of Waset, the Black Land's religious capital. They lived in a two story manor in the wealthy quarter of the city, within walking distance of the massive Karnak temple complex—one of the largest temples in the Two Lands. Nakht had told Mahaad a few months previously that he had been invited to visit the Pharaoh's palace at the end of his current rotation at Karnak was completed. Nakht's rotation ended tonight and he informed Mahaad through Narmer, their chief steward, that he would be taking Mahaad with him when he left for Men-nefer, Egypt's political capital, the following morning.

Mahaad had been sitting cross legged on the roof of their manor overlooking the setting sun, he thanked the steward. Narmer bowed and retreated, leaving Mahaad alone yet again. Mahaad looked out at the Nile and the various boats sailing on its waters. There were a few small reed fishing vessels that were manned by some peasant families from the poorer quarter of the city, returning with their catch of fish. It was currently in the middle stages of the Inundation, or Akhet. Mahaad was always amazed at the gift of rich black mud Hapi bestowed n Egypt, in his living memory always in accordance with the predictions of the Nilometer. But as of now, the fields were covered in water. The Egyptian people had just celebrated the five demon days the month previously. It was currently the end of the second month of Aket.

Mahaad unwrapped himself and stood, his blue eyes still fixed on the Nile. He saw his father coming home and he left to go greet him. "Good evening Father," Mahaad greeted as he entered the enclosed courtyard. Nakht, who was dressed in white linens and an assortment of gold jewelry, smiled at his eldest son. "Good evening son," he returned. Mahaad's mother entered the courtyard with a servant bearing their evening meal on a tray. They exchanged greetings and his father kissed his mother briefly before leading the way to the dining hall. They talked about the day's events, but the topic soon turned to the journey the next day. Mahaad's mother's heart swelled with pride at the thought of her eldest son getting introduced to the Pharaoh himself. Both men would have great blessings if all went well. It was after all, the 15th year of the Pharaoh's rule, and Egypt had prospered greatly under his reign.

"Mahaad told me this afternoon that his teacher has been going through the Instructions of Ptahhotep with him so he can maintain proper decorum at the palace," his mother beamed with pride, even more because it had been at Mahaad's insistence. His father smiled fondly at his eldest son. Mahaad's younger siblings, a brother and sister two and three years his junior had also joined them at the table. They both still wore the side lock of youth, but their mother didn't let them run around naked anymore, much to their annoyance.

They ate bread, honey, cucumbers, and figs for dinner and finished off the meal with some wine to celebrate the impending journey to Memphis. After the servants had cleared the meal away, Mahaad's mother led Mahaad and Nakht upstairs, to give Mahaad a present. His younger siblings ran off to play in the courtyard Mahaad could still hear their squeals of delight faintly. In a trunk next to her bed, she lifted the lid to reveal a new tunic and jewelry for her son. Mahaad stared at them in awe. The linen was finely woven and had been tailored to him perfectly. There were also several golden armbands so he would be able to proudly display his noble status. It was complete with a nice pair of leather sandals.

Mahaad thanked his parents and was still in shock when they began getting ready for bed. Mahaad would save his new clothes for his actual meeting with the Pharaoh. Mahaad changed into a sleeping tunic and fell asleep, thinking of all the wondrous possibilities that Ra's next journey would reveal.

The next morning, Mahaad rose with the sun and he dressed for the day, allowing a servant to help him apply the proper oils and kohl to protect him for the sun's rays. They left soon afterward. Servants loaded their things on the barge they would be taking. Their journey to the capital would take a few days of sailing along the Nile.

After a few days of being on the Nile, Mahaad was getting a bit anxious. "Look son," Nakht pointed to the beautiful white city emerging before them. Mahaad had never been to Men-nefer before. Mahaad stared at all the buildings as they sailed past them. Since it was the inundation they would have to get out of the boat at the city's main port and take a chariot to the palace. Mahaad's heart raced in excitement and he grinned broadly, he'd never ridden in a chariot before! They disembarked when the barge pulled into the port. A charioteer from the palace was already waiting for them on the

dock. Several servants stepped forward to unload their things. Father and son followed the charioteer to the waiting chariot, with two brown horses attached to it. Mahaad noted the smell of the fresh hay that hung in the air.

The duo got in front of the charioteer and they were soon off, bounding down the narrow streets of Men-nefer. Mahaad clung to the front of the chariot, trying to keep his balance, grateful that his strong father was standing behind him, preventing him from falling off. Mahaad looked at all the buildings they passed in wonder, his eyes dancing with excitement and awe. They were riding faster than he even had before and he hoped he could ride again soon. Before Mahaad was aware of it, they were approaching the palace. The great white walls loomed before them and the royal guard saw them and opened the large several ton gates to admit them. The chariot pulled into the courtyard and their driver pulled back on the reins, causing the horses to stop. He jumped down from the chariot and helped his passengers down. He left to fetch a messenger to inform the Pharaoh of the events. While they were waiting for the servant he called for to arrive, Mahaad got a good look at his surroundings.

They were in a courtyard like the one he had a home, only it was much larger and fancier than his. There were many trees that provided cooling shade and it even had a pool of water, in the center. The surrounding walls were gleaming white, much like the pyramids of old they had sailed past on their way here. The servant arrived and beckoned them to follow him to the guest chambers. There were two adjoining rooms next to each other. Mahaad had his own room with a bed with an ivory headrest and as he moved to inspect it closer, he discovered intricate hieroglyphs carved into it. The floor was made of highly polished marble. The walls were decorated with scenes of everyday life, and hunting expeditions. There were also copper braziers set along perimeter of the room that could be lit at night. Mahaad wandered out onto the small balcony that overlooked the Nile.

Mahaad vaguely overheard his father conversing with a servant for a few minutes, before he entered Mahaad's room. "Son," the elder man said, Mahaad turned to face his father, waiting for him to speak. "A messenger just informed me that he vizier informed the Pharaoh of our arrival and that His Majesty will see us in the morning. I will attend a council meeting with the court, and when I am finished I will return for you, to present you to the Pharaoh." Mahaad listened carefully and nodded in understanding when his father finished.

Since it was only the sixth hour of the day, Mahaad asked, "Father, can I see the great library?" Nakht regarded his son for a moment before giving his answer.

"Yes, you may. Find a servant and ask for directions. I have important matters to discuss with Horemheb," Nakht said distractedly.

Mahaad thanked him and quickly left the room. He wandered down a few halls before finally locating a servant and asking for direction. He arrived at the indicated location and pushed the great double doors of the library open. He couldn't stop the gasp that escaped his lips. There were rows upon rows of cubby holes containing scrolls. Each scroll had a small tag on the end to identify the scroll's contents.

Some of them were sealed with wax seals. Suddenly a voice to the boy's left spoke, "If you think this is impressive boy, you should see the library in the _Per Ankh _in the great Karnak Temple."

Mahaad whirled to find a man dressed in a white tunic with gold arm bands glistening in the light. Mahaad nodded at the man, having been taught well by his father to show his superiors respect. "Can I help you?" the man asked him.

Even though Mahaad would have much preferred to read accounts of the great royal magicians of the past, he knew he should be preparing for his meeting the following morning. "Yes, sir. Can you help me locate the _Instructions _of Ptahhotep, Merikare, and Kageami?" Mahaad asked softly. The man's eyes filled with amusement. "You want to read wisdom literature?" he inquired. "You are an interesting young man. I don't believe I have met you before. What is your name boy?"

I am Maaheshemseteped son of Nakht of Waset," he replied proudly.

"What brings you to the palace?"

"My father was invited by the Pharaoh himself. We are going to meet him tomorrow morning. I want to be ready," Mahaad replied earnestly, his blue eyes dancing in anticipation. Mahaad's sincerity made the man's smile grow larger.

"You will go far one day, Maaheshemseteped. It also happens that I am the keeper of records for the palace. I will help you find the writings you seek."

Mahaad thanked him and a few minutes later the elder scribe placed three rolls of papyrus into his hands and sent him on his way. Mahaad fought the urge to run back to his room and begin reading, but he forced himself to walk at a normal pace back. When he arrived he noticed the room was still empty. His father was still gone. He sat down and began to read, beginning with the Instructions of Ptahhotep. He was still learning hieratic, the cursive hieroglyphs of the priests, so his reading wasn't completely smooth yet. But this scribe's hand was much easier to read than the copy he had access to back home.

His father returned a few hours later and summoned a servant to bring them the evening meal. Mahaad enjoyed the seasoned goose, leeks, and figs that were brought to them. The palace had good food! The two of them talked after a servant cleared the dishes away. After a servant lit the braziers that filled the room with soft light, Nakht proposed that they play senet. Mahaad face brightened at the suggestion. Mahaad rose and went over to their things and retrieved the board and the pieces for their game. His father set the board up and took the first roll of the game. Afterwards it was time for bed. Mahaad was exhausted from the trip, but he was also very nervous about meeting the Pharaoh in the morning. When his father went to bed, Mahaad laid in his bed and stared up at the painted starry sky above him. He tossed and turned, unable to find a comfortable position. He lay awake for several hours, his mind racing. Eventually, he drifted off into an uneasy sleep.

Author's Notes:

I know Mahaad introduced himself as Maaheshemseteped, but I was too lazy to type that all the time. He'll be getting a name change pretty soon.

Waset is modern-day Thebes, and Men-nefer is modern-day Memphis.

Please review and let me know what you think! I am open to ideas and constructive criticism!

End
file.